Mad in America
SCIENCE, PSYCHIATRY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Psychosis Treatment: Numbing the World of Spirit

By **Dr Nick Lombardo** - May 7, 2024

The words that follow in this essay come from my own personal reflections as someone who has been diagnosed with schizophrenia and who has experienced psychosis many times throughout life. Therefore, I would like the reader to know that these thoughts are based on my own beliefs and experiences and are not necessarily based on verifiable objective facts.

Even from a scientific perspective, though, there is still much about schizophrenia and psychosis that we do not understand. The scientific study of these kind of phenomena is not as well established and understood as the study of most other areas of science. But why? This to me tends to suggest a subjective personal element is present that often defies the kind of analysis that falls within the domain of science. If this be true, perhaps then it is well worthwhile even for the scientific community to consider the thoughts and reflections of those who have the insight of experience.

Schizophrenia, from my experience, is brought on when the pains and anxieties associated with living become too much to bear that the individual retreats inwardly so much so that they then seek permanent refuge there. Like being sucked into a hole that is difficult to escape from, they become dysfunctional because they are no longer capable of dealing with the business of life, its duties and responsibilities.

The difference between a functional shaman and a dysfunctional schizophrenic is, to my mind, nothing more than the ability of both the shaman and the schizophrenic to retreat inwardly to the world of spirit but for the shaman to be able to pull his or her attention out of that world and back into the everyday world of living. When an individual suffers, it is natural for them to seek out a solution to their suffering, and that solution is to be found inwardly; it is the only place where it exists. It is in this inward space that the individual encounters their unconscious, where visions and communication with spirits and gods occur, where voices are heard emanating from the deepest recesses of the unconscious, sometimes disturbing, sometimes encouraging, but nonetheless, ones that must be dealt with and appeased if the individual is to find peace. It is this encounter with these spirits of the unconscious that bring about the psychotic break that is common among schizophrenics.

Among the medical profession, psychosis has become something to fear, to be avoided at all costs due to the dangers associated with it. A psychosis, however, in my opinion, is a necessary step along the process of recovery for a schizophrenic, for it is in the psychosis that the jewel of self-realisation exists; it is here that the learning experience is found, a learning experience which albeit is difficult to pass but which contains much valuable insight into what it takes to appease those spirits that bring him there.

The fall into a psychosis is not an evil in itself, there is nothing bad about it

unless the individual chooses to allow himself to remain paralysed by it, to cease trying to learn from it, to understand it and overcome it. The psychosis reveals to us where our own personal weaknesses are, and as frightening as it is both for ourselves and those around us, it consequently contains the seed to our own growth. It is unrealistic to believe that every time we try something that we will succeed and overcome it and such is the case also with the lessons and tests emanating from the unconscious that manifest as psychosis.

A further misconception of repeated psychoses in an individual is to think that whenever it is experienced, the individual has relapsed back into his prior state. Given the fact that the nature of all psychoses are different, both among individuals and within the single individual who has experienced it often, each one has a different lesson for us to learn and is an opportunity for progress along our journey. In fact, the more intense the psychosis that is felt, the greater the insight to be gained from it.

Undoubtedly such experiences are scary both for the individual and those around them, but there is nothing to suggest that such experiences, if approached carefully and with the right attitude are not beneficial to the person experiencing them. And even though an individual may have many psychotic episodes throughout his or her life, sometimes there are many lessons to learn and sometimes the same test must be had many times before we can fully learn from it. For those individuals who have been placed on antipsychotic drugs as a form of treatment for their psychotic symptoms, a point of contention often arises when a patient falls back into a psychosis as to the causes of the new psychotic episode. This contention has to do with what is attributed to the underlying cause of the current psychotic episode, that is, whether it is due to the original schizophrenic condition or whether it is due to the antipsychotic drugs themselves and the changes that have occurred to the brain as a result of the long-term use of these drugs.

Whatever the reason happens to be, there is still a lesson to be learnt in the experience of the psychosis itself. Sometimes the psychosis may be due to both factors; however, in the case of the long-term use of the drugs themselves and the resulting changes that have occurred to the brain as the cause of psychosis, in my opinion the lesson to be learnt here is that the individual needs greater

patience and to proceed along a more cautious and slower withdrawal process so as to give the brain enough time to respond to the changes and adapt. This will be different for different people and will depend on their drug profile, length of time they have been on them, biology, diet, environmental stressors, etc. There is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to drug withdrawal; however, the need for patience can be a key factor when determining success.

Let's now talk about the drugs themselves and how they work to suppress the onset of psychosis. My stance is that antipsychotic drugs suppress an individual's access to their unconscious mind. Contents from the unconscious mind often make themselves known to the individual through dreams, and often during waking life itself when dreams are remembered through association with things encountered while awake. Antipsychotic drugs act to suppress the manifestation of unconscious dreams from the memory of the individual. Dreams, according to the pioneering psychiatrist Carl Jung, are an important part of the personal growth of the individual, and so to suppress dreams from the conscious mind is detrimental to the individuation process. The drugs act in a sedative manner, they suppress consciousness making it difficult for the individual to focus their concentration and they inhibit the cognitive faculty from functioning at its optimal level. You can notice particularly in those who are heavily medicated with antipsychotic drugs, the slurring of speech, how thoughts/ideas are expressed much more slowly and with difficulty. This insinuates a slowing down of cognitive ability, of the capacity to reason.

I have been diagnosed with schizophrenia. Whether this diagnosis is true or not, the condition I have, whatever one wishes to call it, is spiritual in nature, not biochemical. I will however attempt to relate here why this condition seems to respond to biochemical treatment even though the condition is spiritual in nature, as this may appear contradictory. Whenever I attempt to phase off the psychiatric drugs, I can feel my inner spiritual strength growing. Naturally, this produces temptations, feelings of pride/hubris in other words, which in my own case, has in the past lead to feelings of grandeur and delusional thinking. This is a spiritual sickness.

There are two ways that such a spiritual sickness can be cured. The first way, which is the more difficult way, is to learn to deal with these feelings of grandeur

by suppressing one's ego, which involves recognising these feelings for what they are, delusional temptations. This first way of treating this spiritual sickness is the natural way and it leads to spiritual growth as it is treating the condition as it ought to be treated. Now, the second way of treating this sickness is to take away these feelings of delusional grandeur by weakening the individual's spirit by taking away the inner spiritual strength they have cultivated. This can be achieved through humiliation. One way this can be achieved is by giving an antipsychotic drug.

The antipsychotic drug functions by altering the chemical processes in the brain but there is no body of research which tells scientists what healthy doses of brain chemicals are; it is merely based on experimentation on a case-by-case basis. However, whatever these drugs seem to be doing to the brain, they have the effect of taking energy away from the individual, of making them tired and of decreasing their control over bodily appetites, whether eating and drinking or sexual. In other words, the individual's instinctual drives are activated.

Evidence of this is also reported in the side effects that people who take these drugs tend to report. Therefore, by taking energy away from the individual, by making them tired and by taking away the ability to control bodily appetites, they are weakened and their spiritual strength is thereby taken away slowly over time as the drug is administered. This is the second way of treating the spiritual sickness known as schizophrenia. This second way, however, robs the individual of spiritual growth. As humans we are compelled to learn and to grow and therefore, this second way of dealing with this sickness for many of us does not feel right and we fight back against the system that attempts to restrain us in this way. This at least is what I have noticed in myself.

Do psychiatrists have a right to enforce antipsychotic drugs on an individual without knowing what it feels like to take them? I have been on an off these drugs many times during my life for prolonged periods in both cases and insightfully know what it feels like to both take and not to take these drugs. Contrast this to the individual who has been on these drugs for a singular long period for most of their life and with the individual who has never been on these drugs at all. In the former case, the individuals experience of being on these drugs for a prolonged period of time has become the accepted normality of their

existence and they have very little to compare it to other than the distant memory of an early period of life absent these drugs. For the individual who has never been on antipsychotic drugs, the insight is completely lacking; there is no way they could make a comparison.

Obviously, from the point of view of the psychiatric establishment, we must weigh up the pros and cons, and determine whether it is better to sacrifice some of the side effects associated with taking these pills in exchange for a relatively "normal" life. Let us pause for a moment and consider what is actually being said here. Consider the case of someone being numbed with alcohol to help them escape from their psychological problems. Alcohol does have the effect of making people forget their psychological problems, and from my own experience, antipsychotic drugs aimed at "managing" schizophrenia have a similar numbing effect, although they work by numbing the individual's sensibility to the world of spirit.

The schizophrenic is he who is, in a manner of speaking, oversensitive to the world of spirit and, at some time in his earlier life, has called on the help of the spirits to aid him in his quest to overcome whatever problems he may have been facing. For most schizophrenics, this usually happens at the point of becoming an adult and assuming responsibility for one's life. In many cases, it was brought about by a need and a desire to grow inwardly as a person. Therefore, for many, the approach by the psychiatric establishment to administer and enforce the use of drugs to "treat" or "manage" their condition is to rob these individuals of their desire and need to grow as a spiritual beings.

In other words, it is antithetical to the very reasons that caused the onset of schizophrenia to begin with, and is therefore a strategy that is doomed to fail for many as they refuse to comply with such treatment.

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